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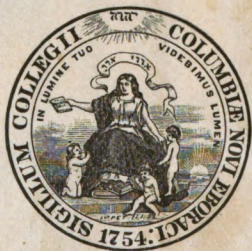
The Pentateuch, its languages and its characters

Michael Levi
Rodkinson

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THE PENTATEUCH,

ITS LANGUAGES AND
ITS CHARACTERS.

A TREATISE UPON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE
AND THE EARLY TRANSLATIONS OF
THE PENTATEUCH INTO GREEK
AND ARAMAIC.

—By—

MICHAEL L. RODKINSON,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF AMULETS," ETC.

195 WEST TWELFTH STREET, CHICAGO.

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TO THE

FOUNDER OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION IN
LONDON, ENGLAND,

THE REV. PROF. DAVID W. MARKS,

RABBI OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION OF ENGLAND,

*I*N token of gratitude for the many valuable services rendered by
him to the cause of true Judaism, science in general, and Hebrew
learning in particular, as well as for the great kindness shown by
him to his person in London in the years 1881 and 1882,

Most respectfully,

DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

CHICAGO, ILL., February 13, 1894.

PREFACE.

Two Hebrew scholars, both Germans, both professors in a Rabbinical seminary, both doctors and philologists, are in opposition to each other in regard to the Aramaic (called after "Onkelos") translation of the Pentateuch, and in regard to the question, who accomplished same? One of them, a professor at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, recently published in the *Deborah* (1893, No. 21) a criticism of the pamphlet, "History of Amulets," and therein the learned gentleman asserts the following:

"We should expect of the Russian-Jewish scholars, who are so well versed in the 'sea of the Talmud,' grand efforts for the stimulation of Jewish theology, providing the lack of philologic-historical education proved no serious obstacle.

"Mr. Rodkinson makes, for example, Onkelos the proselyte and pupil of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, the composer of the Aramaic Targum, an opinion, the incompetency of which Azariah di Rossi proved more than 300 years ago, without, however, drawing the full consequences therefrom. That certain note in the Babylonian Talmud (Megillah 3 a.) is based upon a confounding of the same with the Greek Bible translator

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Akylas. The fact also, that Hillel was a Babylonian, seems to me, in spite of the fact that such is the universal belief, rather doubtful (?). Both facts, however, are of the utmost importance for R's. hypothesis. Considering that Onkelos could not have written the Targum in Palestine during the second century, same having come into existence only in the third century, in Babylon, his translation of the word "Totaphoth," by "Tephillin," does not prove that same were known in Palestine during the second century. However, this observation does not destroy the fact that the Tephillin were of Babylonian origin and originally only magic amulets.*)"

Therefore, Prof. Dr. Deutsch says, that any one, who asserts that the Targum Onkelos was written in the second century, lacks all philologic-historical education. In opposition to him, another scholar, Dr. Berliner, Professor at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, says, that the Targum in question was composed, not in the third, nor even in the second century, but al-

*By above assertions the critic shows, that he has no interest in the actual contents of my publication, but simply wishes to criticise and find fault—nothing more, for in my work, entitled "Ursprung und Entwicklung des Phylacterien Ritus bei den Juden," page 52, remark IV, I say as follows: "I fix the date of the several Targums according to the inferences of the Talmud, as this work is written expressly for students and followers of the Talmud, and not according to the opinions of the modern critics, who fix the dates of all the Targums at a later period," and this Dr. Deutsch read, as he is in possession of my mentioned work.

ready in the latter part of the first century. (Berliner's *Targum Onkelos*, p. 107).

Which of them is right?

Were it to enter my mind, to decide between the two learned professors, I would certainly draw upon myself the ill will of Dr. Deutsch, and he would say, that not only am I in lack of all philologic education, but that I am not even in possession of common decency, for how can one, who calls darkest Russia his native land, have the audacity to decide between two Germans, who are both of them, doctors, professors and philologists.

I am, therefore, somewhat timid about casting my verdict between the two, but nevertheless will tell the plain truth, when stating, that Dr. Deutsch, in spite of his erudition, does not even possess the fundamental principles of a critical method.

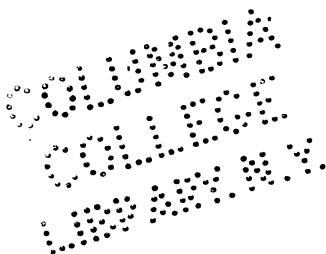
In order to be able to criticize the work of a person, and even if that person be a Russian, one must in the first place make himself familiar with the contents, tendencies and arguments of the subject, and besides one must understand something of that itself, that the censor judges of. Truly, Dr. Deutsch has referred to "Azariah di Rossi," whom I have cited often enough in my work, "Tephillah Le Mosche Micoucy," and to his "Meor Enayim," published some 300 years ago, but maintains a stolid silence about the numerous learned researchers of the present century, who have written whole works and smaller and larger treatises in large numbers upon the *Targum Onkelos*, thereby proving clearly that he has

either forgotten all about what has been written since di Rossi upon that subject, or that he has never heard of same. It can, therefore, be of but very little consequence to both Dr. Berliner and my humble self, to argue about Dr. Deutsch's theory. For where such prejudice is found, or where such errors have taken root, as with Dr. Deutsch, there no disputing object presents itself. Dr. Deutsch has really said nothing of importance, and still I am truly grateful to him for his criticism, as he furnished me an incentive to investigate the subject and publish this pamphlet as the result of my investigations.

I also publish in this pamphlet a chapter of my new work, "What is the Talmud?" in the hope, that its perusal will elicit from my readers the desire for its completion and material encouragement, as I flatter myself that it will throw a new light upon the contents of the Talmud, for neither the followers, nor the antagonists of the Talmud, have given it the attention necessary to determine what it really is.

THE AUTHOR.

CHICAGO, February, 1894.



THE PENTATEUCH,

ITS LANGUAGES AND ITS CHARACTERS.

The Pentateuch, with its "*Targums*" or translations, furnishes a wide field for discussion and argument. While it is well known, that the Septuaginta were the first to translate the Pentateuch, and it is generally assumed that they translated it from the Hebrew language, in which all the modern Bibles are written; I have reason to doubt this, however, as the reader will find further on. The principal translations immediately following that of the Septuaginta were those of Akylas in Greek, and Onkelos in Aramaic, better known as the "*Targum Onkelos*." The latter, of all translations, is considered the most authentic among the Jews, and the Jewish code ordains its reading every week, the same as the Hebrew Bible, with the exception, that only one verse of the Targum Onkelos be read to two of the Bible.

I can hardly think of any theme, that has occupied the minds of researchers to so large an extent, and the opinions of which have been so diversified as the question concerning the "Targum Onkelos." I can name four separate learned works upon it, viz.:—"Nethinah La-Ger," by Rabbi Nathan Adler; "Oheb Ger," by S. D. Luzzato; "Sichron La Acharonim," by S. J. Rappaport, and "Targum Onkelos," by A. Berliner. Thereto I may add many larger treatises, for example: Zunz "Gottesdienstliche Vorträge," page 42 of the new edition, Frankel "Darké ha Mishnah," p. 101, and "Ueber den Einfluss" etc, by the same author. Herzfeld, Part II, p. 64; Grætz (V., 510), who also touches the subject in his previous works. Luzzato in Geiger's "Zeitschrift" (V., 126), the same in his letters to Rappaport (Part II, 194-213). Moses Landau in his edition of the "Aruch." I. H. Weis in his "Dor Dor We-Dorshow," (Vol. II, 136 as also in Vol. I he speaks of the Targum Onkelos). See also the Encyclopedias, among which the Real Encyclopedia by Dr. Hamburger; also in many other treatises the Targum question is touched upon. Still no decision has been reached, and still the question awaits a satisfactory solution.

It must be admitted that Dr. Berliner has furnished a thorough treatise in his work. He thoroughly probes in his mentioned work all previous opinions; and even his own views and conclusions are not altogether groundless. Still his conclusion that R. Akiba composed the larger portion of the Targum, if not entirely,

largely lacks proof. First of all, R Akiba was a statesman, who was active all his life in political affairs, which were of more importance and more closely allied to him than the composition of an Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, for which he also must have barely had time. Secondly (and that is the main thing), anyone knowing the method of R. Akiba, knows also that the method of the "*Targum Onkelos*" is totally and fundamentally opposed to that of R. Akiba. In the hands of R. Akiba the text of the Pentateuch was as the clay in the hands of the potter, which he moulds and forms at will. He expounded and explained the Scriptures in a tendentic form and according to the demands of his age, without considering the mere implied meaning of the words.

It is unnecessary to bring proof for the above, for R. Akiba's method is well known, and many places referring thereto have been cited by I. H. Weis in his above mentioned work. I shall however cite two extracts which will confirm my words, and which I. H. Weis omitted.

1). Simon of Emaus explained all passages containing the word **אִתּוֹ** meaning—with--by adding some similar object. In coming across the passage **אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא** "thou shalt fear the Lord thy God," he hesitated, until R. Akiba came and said **אִתּוֹ ה'** etc., "with the Lord, etc.", includes the Talmudi Chachamim (scholars) (Pesachim XXII, b.). We see here, that R. Akiba did not hesitate to equalize the reverence due a "*Talmud Chacham*" with that due God, a theory not based upon tra-

dition and which he endeavored to base upon a passage of the scriptures.....

2). A remarkable legend can be found in *Menachoth* 29 a, viz.: "When God pointed out R. Akiba to Moses, while the former was in the act of expounding the *Thorah*, Moses listened, but could understand nothing, and was in consequence very much depressed in spirits, until he heard his name cited as authority in the matter under discussion." This satyric legend proves clearly, that the scriptures contain none of R. Akiba's explanations, for he formed the words perforce until they coincided with his views.

Hence the sages say justly (*Sotah*, 49 b.): "When R. Akiba died, the arms of the *Thorah* ceased to exist," which *Raschi* comments upon by saying: "The reign of individual opinion was terminated as well as the attempt to base the traditional explanation of the scriptures upon superfluous or missing letters, etc."

This being so, how can we come to the conclusion, that R. Akiba composed the *Targum* entirely or even partly, when it is entirely opposed to his method.

Aside from this, however, much more can be said. The principal incentive to researchers of the *Onkelos*-question was furnished by a remark (in *Megilla* 3 a), wherein it says that Rabbi Ika held the word מפורש in *Nehemiah*, viii, 8, to mean "translation," thus bringing about the research of the meaning of the word מפורש; and if the meaning of that word is translation, which and whose translation? It was, therefore, the object of

many to determine whether there was any truth in this explanation of Rabbi Ika. So many opinions and doctrines being found in the Targum of Onkelos, which are of a later age, and the said Targum containing many Aramaic words, which were not in use at the time of Onkelos' alleged existence, many views were advanced to explain these apparent facts, which views, while they widely differ, can be grouped into three classes.

Class I teaches, that Onkelos is identical with the proselyte Akylas, who at the time of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua translated the Torah into Greek. This class embraces the explanations given by Nathan Adler, Luzzato and others.

Class II teaches, that there is no connection between the Aramaic and the Greek translation of the Torah, and also that the former has been unjustly attributed to Onkelos. (Frankel, Herzfeld and others).

Class III teaches, that even if Onkelos were not the Targumist, still the Targum named after him was formed according to the translation of Akylas and therefore has been endowed with the similar name of Onkelos. (Grætz, Weis and others).

All these explanations are based upon the teachings of Rabbi Ika, but entirely ignore another talmudic passage, which I shall cite further on, which throws light on the mentioned teachings and which only subsequently aims to justify the already existing, as is generally the case with talmudic definitions.

Now, then, to the mentioned passage: "Said Mar

Sutra, according to others Mar Ukba: 'Originally the Torah was given to Israel in Hebrew characters and in the Hebrew language; the second time it was given to Israel in Ezra's time, but in Assyrian characters and in the Aramaic language; finally the Assyrian characters and the Hebrew language were selected for Israel and the Hebrew characters and the Aramaic language were left to the Hediotim (Idiots). What do we mean by Hebrew characters? The *Libunah* characters.' " So far goes the Talmud (Sanhedrin XXI, b.). Also in the Talmud of Jerusalem this passage may be found.

This above report emanates from one of the Babylonian exilarchs, for both Mar Sutra and Mar Ukba were exilarchs.* Nowhere can a contradiction be found, as the traditions of the exile princes, who reigned continuously for about 450 years are not doubted.

The passage also tells us that already in Ezra's time the Israelites had the Torah in the Aramaic language

*See, בקרת והארות by Abraham Krochmal, in the treatise קילעא דבי ריש גלותא, see also in my periodical ראשי גלויות שכבבל the treatise entitled. In my opinion Mar Sutra was a judge called Sut (Sutra), the first of the exiled princes, who reigned during the time of Rabban Gamliel Hazakan, about the year 45 after Christ, or it was Ukban, who lived 4 generations later. The first Mar Ukba lived about the year 215 and Mar Sutra more than 100 years later or about 332. Mar Sutra being mentioned here before Mar Ukba, I may say that Sut, the contemporary of Rabban Gamliel Hazakan, is the one referred to, the latter, as is well known, being the one who ordered the Targum buried beneath a wall.

and in that language only. The Tosephta (Sanhedrin, c 4) teaches us, that Ezra himself, like Moses, gave Israel a language and characters for a Torah. If we look further into the subject, we find that in his day the selection of the Aramaic language and Assyrian characters was for the mass of the people a necessity, for said language and characters were then predominant and the people had long since forgotten their original language, a fact much deplored by Ezra and Nehemiah. We also know (by Kings II, xxviii, 26) that the more prominent Judaers were already in Hiskia's time familiar with the Aramaic language, bringing same in use when communicating with the Assyrians and Babylonians. Even, if at that time the majority did not understand said language, we find, however, that the Hebrew language, or as it was then called, the Judaic language, was on the decline, so that at the time of King Josiah, the prophet Jeremiah, at one time speaking against idolatry and paganism, selected the Aramaic idioms (Jer. x 11) Therefrom we may conclude, that he thought and spoke in the Aramaic language and subsequently wrote his prophecies in the Hebrew language. Thus had the people in the period between the reign of Hiskia and Josiah become accustomed to the Aramaic language, and after wandering into the Babylonian exile had forgotten the Hebrew letters and characters rapidly and then totally. So nothing remained for Ezra and the other leaders of the people to do, but to give the Israelites their Torah in the familiar Assyrian characters and Aramaic lan-

guage. Such was the state of affairs in Ezra's day; but when did Israel receive the Torah a second time in Assyrian characters and in the Hebrew language?

"The Assyrian characters and the Hebrew language was selected for Israel," says the Exilarch, but gives no account of who the selectors were and when the selection took place. If we wish to solve this question, we must dive deep into the "sea of the Talmud" and bring forth its pearls. We find the following:

"I recollect your grandfather, Rabban Gamliel Hazakan sitting on a step of the Temple Hill, and when a book, "The Targum of Job," was brought before him, he commanded the mason and the latter immured the book in the threshold (Sabbath, 15a).

When the scriptures are translated by "Targum," or by a name in any other language, they may be saved from fire on Sabbath, but they must be buried (Tosephta *ibid*). Rabbi Simon, son of Gamliel, says: "Even the scriptures were not allowed to be written in other languages, except in Greek (Megillah I, 8)." In the Talmud of Jerusalem is said, "It has been tried and found that the scriptures cannot be correctly translated into any language but the Greek (*Ibid*)."

Having therefore cited all passages bearing upon the subject, we again turn to the closing remark of the Exilarch as previously cited: "The Hebrew characters and Aramaic language were left to the Hediotim (Idiots), and to the question, what constitutes the Hebrew characters? the answer given was the *Libunah* characters, that is—the Samaritan.

Thus, the foundation of all research as to the origin of the Targum, is the above mentioned remark of the Exilarch, although so little attention has been devoted to it by all previous researchers, and in my opinion it not only throws a light upon the origin of the Targum, but also upon all other translations of the scriptures in the time of our sages. Every studious reader will see between the lines of the above "*maimar*," that the Torah which Ezra wrote, or which was written in his day in Aramaic, is still in the possession of the Samaritans. It is possible that the Samaritans have falsified the Torah in some instances, as we find frequently in the Talmud, where the Pharisees say to the Sadducees: You have falsified your Torah; but there is no doubt that this, and this only, was the cause of the concealment of the Aramaic Torah, for when the Samaritans and Sadducees began to use the literal sense of the Torah, without any tradition and regardless of time and place, the Pharisees had no other recourse but to conceal the Torah and hide it from view. They also said therefore, "He who translates the verse literally, is a liar (Badai) and he who dares to add to it (without tradition), is a blasphemer (Keduschin, 49 a)." It is certain that they said this against the Samaritans, whom they even previously call IDIOTS.

Being forced to discard the Aramaic Torah, they had to substitute another, as the people demanded their Torah. They then decided upon the Assyrian characters, which were familiar to all, the Hebrew characters

having been forgotten, and the Hebrew language, as being an original language and not affected by the then existing circumstances of Palestine, which was constantly between two fires, falling first into the hands of the Greeks, then of the Romans, Egyptians or Syrians, and while under the rule of one or the other nation constantly subjected to changes in language, each nation desiring to make its own language predominant. The Greek translation then existing was therefore of no avail, as they knew full well that the other nations would destroy it.

I cannot quite agree with I. H. Weis's opinion that the Aramaic Targum was discarded in Rabban Gamliel Hazakan's day, this having in my opinion taken place several generations before, when the strife between the Pharisees and the Saducees was in full blast. Certain it is, however, that during the period between Ezra's time and the latter half of the Priest regime, the Torah existed only in Aramaic, for, as we have heard from the Exilarch, in the Holy language and in Assyrian characters, *it had never previously been written*. Such being the case, Septuaginta translated the Pentateuch from the Aramaic, and not from the Hebrew and Philo of Alexandria, the most famous philosopher of his day, when stating this fact in his book, "the Life of Moses" was perfectly correct, but he errs in asserting that the Torah was originally given to Israel in Aramaic, and does so for the simple reason, that he knew nothing of the existence of the Torah in Hebrew characters and

in the Holy Language, as same was concealed immediately after the issue of the Aramaic Torah, as we will prove later on.*

Therefore the Holy language was selected, it being certain, that the originality of the Hebrew language would preclude its being forgotten by their descendants, even if they should be under foreign dominion, for an original language will always have its researchers, even if only one in a community.

We do not know whether they possessed some of the Torah that Ezra concealed, or whether they translated from the Aramaic, but we do know, that as long as the Aramaic Torah existed, there was no Hebrew Torah, the latter coming into existence, when the former became extinct.

The Hebrew language, however, not being sufficient for the masses, who really did not understand Hebrew, and the Greek translation existing at that time, being the one devised by the Septuaginta and of no account, the later generation had to procure a translation of the Bible in the current language, or in one familiar to the masses.

There opportunity favored them; for Akylas, the proselyte, who was a native Greek and knew his native language thoroughly, besides being a pupil of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, who were in turn the most prominent

*I am grateful to Mr. M. Shinedling for the article he sent me for publication in the "Hakol" whereby he reminded me of this statement of Philo.

pupils of R. Johanan ben Zakai, was entrusted with the translation of the Thorah into Greek, under the guidance of his masters. His translation was approved of, and the mentioned "Maimar:" "It was tried and proven that the Greek language alone is adaptable for a translation of the Thorah," then came into existence as well as the remark of Simon ben Gamliel, which we have previously cited.

All this was, however, sufficient only for the Palestinian Jews, who were then familiar with the Greek language; but for the Babylonian Jews, who were then in the majority and who had even established at that time colleges for the study of the Bible, and its commentaries, and for whom neither the original, nor the translation was of any avail, their language being Aramaic, an Aramaic translation was absolutely necessary. The old Aramaic Thorah, even had it been found, was practically useless, firstly, because the language had undergone great changes and had been vastly improved in the 600 years or so, elapsing between Ezra's time and the Exilarchy of Babylon,* and secondly because it had been discarded for reasons already mentioned. Thereto we may add that the Palestinians did not care to entrust the Babylonians with the translation of the Thorah in Aramaic; by reason of their fear that it would do them great harm, not being in accordance with their tradi-

*Comparison of the Samaritan Thorah, edition of A. Brull, with the language of the Aramaic Targum, will clearly prove that fact.

tions and aim, in like manner as it is known, that they did not entrust the Babylonians with their festivals. For this reason the Palestinians were compelled to select a man versed in both the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, and besides a disciple of their theories. They then found Onkelos. It may be, that Onkelos was a Persian proselyte and may be he was not, but one thing is certain, that he was a man well versed in his native language and in Hebrew, and a disciple of Palestinian doctrines. In consequence he was entrusted with the translation of the Thorah in Aramaic, under the control of Palestinian scholars. Naturally, the later Targum embraced the later doctrines and rites for the Babylonian Jews, and for that reason the Targum differed from the Targum of Akylas.

This Targum was written and transmitted to the Babylonian colleges. The copying and selling of books was then of very rare occurrence, and only a century later, we find that scribes came into existence, who gained a livelihood by copying. These scribes, however, being not of the common populace, but of the learned class, and in the intervening century, the language being further developed and new rites added, they added to and changed some passages. For this reason Di Rossi and the later critics found words, ordinances and laws, which at the time of the pupils of R. Johannan ben Zakai, had not yet existed. This brought forth their assertion that the Targum was entirely created in the third century, and that the name Onkelos was incorrect. Now all this

is unnecessary, because the scribes of that age were all noted scholars, one of them being R. Hananel, the pupil of the famous Rab, who was allowed to write the entire Thoras, Sephorim and Mezuzas, etc., by heart and who was an excellent Aramaic scholar, by reason of his Babylonian nativity. When such men as he copied and sold the Torah, it is but natural to assume, that they added whatever new rites arose during their period.

So we see, that originally the Targum was written in Palestine, and subsequently copied and sold in Babylon a century later. I do not assert that the name of the writer in Palestine was Onkelos, or that he was called Onkelos, by reason of the first Targum being written by Akylas. I will not agree with Luzzato, who says that the Targum was compiled in the second century, but was not written until the third century by reason of the prohibitory ordinance in the Talmud. "Words of Law spoken by word of mouth, thou shalt not write down,"* because the Mishnah had already been written, but I do

*There is a chapter in the Jerusalem Talmud (Megillah vii) as follows: "R. Samuel, son of Isaac, seeing a teacher instructing children out of a written Targum said to him: "It is not allowed to teach traditional lore out of a written book." This chapter probably was the source of Luzzato's opinion, which, however, is not correct, as R. Samuel was of the later Amoraim, in whose time the Targum Onkelos was already accepted and circulated, and he did not want to have the children taught the inferences of the Targum, but simply the literal meaning of the verses, for he did not say anything derogatory to the Targum, but simply mentioned a written book.

agree with him, that it was not circulated among the people until the third century, for reasons already stated previously and mentioned by me in the "History of Amulets," viz.: that until that time the copying by scribes was a very rare occurrence.

A controversy now arose between such of the Babylonians, as could compare the Targum of Onkelos with that of Akylas, and found disparagements, and in order to settle all such controversies, and make the Targum of Onkelos paramount and popular authority, it was announced to have been the original translation of the Torah, which Moses gave on the Mount Sinai and was backed by the statement of Rabbi Ika, who pronounced the word **תפורה** to be synonymous with Targum, in accordance with the rule of R. Johanan, stating: If it is but possible to ascribe any Halakha to Moses, do so! This subsequent ruling was imperatively necessary, and we can see the justice of the claim, that all doctrines were ordained after the deeds they referred to had already been accomplished, and which we shall conclusively prove later on.

Thus, all our critics that layed such great stress upon the word **תפורה**, whether it means Targum or not, engaged in a vain and useless task.

I have previously stated in some of my publications, that most of the Mishnahs referred to ordinances and customs already in vogue, and did not contain new behests. I proved my assertion by one indisputable ordinance in the Mishnah: "If a Lulav is stolen, or is

withered, it must not be used." We find in Leviticus XXIII, 40, the commandment: "And ye shall take unto you on the first day, boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, etc."

If the *Thana* of the Mishnah had intended to establish a new ordinance or to only complete the above commandment, he must necessarily have first held, that the branches of palm trees meant the "Lulav." This would have been an original ordinance, or a completion of the above commandment. But he does no such thing. He takes it for granted that the Lulav had been in use for many years, and so indeed it had, and only remarks, that if the "Lulav is stolen, etc." In no part of the Bible and nowhere else is mention made of Lulav, and only in the Mishnah do we find the word "Lulav" signifying a branch, but not a particular kind of a branch, for where the Mishnah wishes to specify the kind of branch, we find for example, "Lulav of a grapevine." Lulav is really the Syrian word for branch. This proves, therefore, that the ordinance of the Mishnah refers to an already existing custom, and does not refer to or stand as a completion to the commandment of the Bible, although the Amoraim stated in the Tract Brachoth, where the Mishnah commences: "At what time of the night must *Krishma* be said," that the Mishnah must first ordain that *Krishma* be said and then state at what time, and that still it refers to the verse of Deut. VI, 7: "Thou shalt talk of them when thou liest down, etc." But this is not so, and Rabbi Ezekiel Landau errs in saying

that because the Amoraim stated the above, all the Mishnahs refer to verses of the Bible direct; for we find that this Krishma was also a very old custom, as it is said in Tract Yuma, that at the offering of sacrifices Krishma was said.

The mentioned Mishnah of the Lulav is therefore conclusive proof that all the Mishnahs have the same tendency. So have I also explained the first Mishnah of Pesachim, wherein are devoted the first 8 pages for the determination of the meaning of the word *Or* (אור), whether it be day or night. My explanation is that *Or* referred to morning twilight of the day preceding Passover, when the eating of leavened bread is prohibited after the fourth hour of day. The women, therefore, had to arise before daybreak and bake their bread for breakfast by candlelight, immediately after which they gathered the crumbs of the leavened bread, so as to prevent their being scattered around on Passover. The Mishnah, therefore, only refers to this custom without ordaining that the Chometz must be gathered on the eve of Passover. (See Barkay, Vol. I).

Thus we see that in all instances the Mishnah only referred to old customs and brought no original ordinances whatever.

Also the Mishnah in Tract Chulin, which decides the question of a drop of milk falling into a pot of meat, was inserted after the Thana Rab had, while in the City of Talalpush, prohibited the boiling of meat in milk, which the Jews then and there practiced (Ibid, 110).

In like manner as all these Mishnahs and ordinances referred to existing customs, so Rabbi Ika explained the word **מפורש** to mean Targum, after the latter had already been introduced.*

We see, therefore, that our sages were determined and made it their highest aim to maintain the unity of the Bible, and prevent disputes arising from any differences that may occur, when two or more Bibles are in existence. Just immediately before the destruction of the first temple, when the prophets foresaw that the temple would be purloined of all its contents, the original tablets containing the ten commandments, and even the receptacle of same, disappeared (see Yuma, 52b).

After Ezra saw the necessity of giving the Jews their Torah in the Aramaic language, the original Hebrew Torah disappeared, and I have seen it written that the modern Samaritans whenever they use the Torah during worship, curse Ezra, and do so not because they have any reason, but because it is a tradition with them, and it seems clear to me that they do so because when they were accused of having falsified their Torah, they could not produce the original and attributed its loss to Ezra.

*Really the Targum became so popular that we find an ordinance in the Talmud requiring the individual reading of the Targum as follows: "Read the Hebrew verse twice and the Targum verse once." The reason of this was, in my opinion, only to teach the Hebrew language from the TARGUM, as the latter was well known, while the former was in its infancy.

When the Aramaic translation had to be changed into Greek, we see, as I have already stated, the citation when Gamliel ordered the Aramaic Targum which was found to be destroyed.

Even the prophets and the Hagiographa, where the least disparagement of the original Torah was found, the sages wanted to destroy (Sabbath 13, and many other places), and it was with the greatest difficulty and after a number of discussions, that Proverbia, Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel were handed down to posterity. One book, however, the Book containing the Genealogy of both the prominent and notorious men, was sacrificed, although reluctantly (Pesachim, 62 a) in order not to create any disputes, for the sages foresaw with their ingenuity and sagacity, that if this were not done, it would be the greatest misfortune for Israel, causing internal strife and subsequent division into sects and different denominations.

The Christians, however, did not take this matter into consideration, and hence there are four separate and distinct Gospels, "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John," and there is a legend bearing upon this, which I wish to quote to my readers as follows: "When the church fathers saw how many Gospels were written, they were at a loss which to accept, so they decided to build a barn in an open field, with apertures on all sides, and lay the Gospels on stands in the barn, and those which the wind would not blow off, they would accept." All with the exception of the four existing Gospels were blown

off and so these four were accepted. It is therefore no wonder that where several Gospels exist, many creeds should be formed and so I also answer the question, I personally asked of the late Prof. Dr. Franz Delitzsch, of Leipzig in 1884, "Why have we Jews retained what you believe to be the original Bible given us by Moses some 4000 years ago, in spite of the many persecutions and driftings from place to place that we have experienced, whereas you Christians, who since the fourth century have held the upper hand, have not a single original Gospel, written by the apostles, as you told me yourself you have only translations from the Greek, while Matthew and other apostles did not know one word of Greek and wrote the Gospels in Syriac." This question Prof. D. could not answer, except by saying that such was God's will. This proves that our sages had far more foresight and knew that we must at all events preserve the unity and originality of the Bible, and hence arose their saying in Zohar, "God, the Torah and Israel are one." By which is meant, that as God is one so shall the Torah be one and Israel be one and not divided into sects. This is the Trinity of Judaism in opposition to the Trinity of Christianity.

I think I have, by this article, convinced Dr. Deutsch that my lack of philologic education did not prevent my reading di Rossi and the other critics of the age, that I have cited, but while I am speaking about languages, I wish to add a few remarks concerning our own, the Hebrew language.

We see in our modern history, nations who at one time were self-governing, now oppressed and subjugated by foreign powers, nay, even absorbed by foreign countries, but withal they have maintained and upheld their own language, have jealously guarded and treasured it as something sacred. I refer to the Poles, Hungarians, Bulgarians, etc. Not so, however, with the Jews. Already in the time of the first temple, the Jews had sought to acquire not only the customs, but also the language of their neighbors, to the utter neglect of their own, the Hebrew, as I have proven previously, that during the time of the later kings, Aramaic was spoken in preference to Hebrew, and after having been in Babylon barely a century, they lost their language and even their written characters, which have not been revived to this day. I leave it for the researchers of Hebrew lore to decide whether with the loss of their language the Jews lost their independence, and I also leave it for the researchers to determine whether the loss of their language caused the loss of their independence, or vice versa, for it is my opinion that the former was the case.

During the existence of the first temple, while the Jews were under foreign dominion, their internal Government was left to themselves. Their conquerors robbed them of several cities, but did in no way interfere with their internal affairs, as they did during the existence of the second temple, and still we see that gradually, instead of developing their language, they utterly neglected it, for even Jeremiah, to say nothing of

the later prophets, Haggai, Zacharias and Malachai, spoke very poor Hebrew. This shows that they lost their self-esteem by striving to acquire foreign customs, manners and languages. Loss of self esteem must necessarily entail loss of independence.

Some critics may attempt to contradict me by producing Isaiah II, who existed at the time of the Exodus of Israel from Babylon, and proving that he spoke excellent Hebrew, even better than Isaiah I. To this I can but say, that this is no proof, for we see that while Hebrew to-day is a dead language, the writers of it even not speaking it, still I am positive that in the 21st or 22nd century, when people will see the famous Hebrew poems of Gordon and Lebensohn, the novels of Mappu and all the Hebrew daily and periodical publications, they will undoubtedly say that in the 19th century the Hebrew language was commonly used by some nation, like any other language. We know, however, that it is dead beyond revival and the same was the case in Isaiah II's time. He was probably the only one who had such command of the language, and he himself proclaims it in Chap. 49, v. 2, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword," and in Chap. 50, v. 4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak," etc.

Thus my conviction is, that the endeavor of the Jews to affiliate themselves with their neighbors, to adopt their customs, learn their manners and language, caused the loss of their self-esteem even at the time of the first temple and brought about the utter neglect of their language. Well, now, is a nation without a language capable of self-government?

A CHAPTER OF MY FORTHCOMING BOOK:

WHAT IS THE TALMUD?

After dwelling in the introduction of the above work upon the development of all the different creeds in general, and the creed of the Israelites from the time of the Patriarch Abraham, until the time of the Doctors of the "*Mishnah*" in particular, the chapter commences as follows:

The only religion in the world, that has not been divided into a number of denominations and did not form separate sects, is the Jewish, for the small sect of Karaites existing in Russia and Austria and the still smaller sect of the Samaritans in Asia Minor, number so few and are so steadily on the decrease, that they cannot really be termed separate sects. Although the total number of Jews in the world exceed seven millions, they all form virtually one sect, possess but one creed and may fully be designated as *Talmud* Jews; for even the Reform Jews tacitly accept in many of their essential beliefs and customs the teachings of the Talmud. Thus they pronounce (Jehovah) יהוה as (Adonai) אֲדֹנָי in accordance with the prescription of the Talmud; celebrate

the festivals of the year on dates established by the Talmud; believe with the Talmud in the immortality of the soul; their laws of marriage are Talmudic and the prayer for the deceased (the Kaddish prayer) owes its origin to the Haggada of the Talmud.

There are many uncritical minds who would fain persuade us that the Talmud is primarily a commentary upon the Bible or Pentateuch. It is nothing of the kind. He is indeed a queer exegete who establishes maxims which are just the reverse of the text he has before him. Thus the saying of R. Jose, one of the renowned doctors of the Mishnah, whose authority was unquestioned *e. g.*, to the compiler of that code (*cf.* Yebamoth 105). "Neither did the Shekhina descend to the earth, nor did Moses and Elijah ascend to Heaven" (Sukkah 5) contradicts explicit statements in the Bible (Ex. xix, 20: "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai;" ib. 3: "And Moses went unto God;" 2 Kings ii, 11: "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven").

No one ever accused the author of this remarkable saying, of heresy, nor even of false exegesis; only weak attempts were made by the later students of the Talmud at mitigating the import of the saying by a forced explanation, viz.: That the Shekhina, when descending to the earth, never comes below 10 (עשרה) hands in height, where the dominion of the earth begins*.

*These later students explained the contradiction of Rabbi Jose in the following manner: "The dominion of heaven ends at the height of 10 hands measure from the earth and the *Shekhina* reaches only to that height

The preceding is an example of a saying found in the Haggadic portions of the Talmud. Cases are not wanting in the Halakha, when the Pentateuchal: Eye for eye, tooth for tooth (Ex. xxi, 24; Lev. xxiv, 20; cf. ib. 19: "As he hath done, so shall it be done to him," and v. 10: "As he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again") is explained by the Talmud (Baba Kamma 84) as referring to a pecuniary indemnity, and no one can make us believe that the Talmudists were not convinced of their forced exegesis, which they employed, because they would not accede to the principle of abrogating the Law (as the Christian Jews did in the name of Jesus Christ), and on the other hand were too advanced in their views not to recognize the injustice and cruelty of the literal Biblical Law.

Similarly the "forty stripes" which are to be given for certain crimes (Deut. xxv, 3), is reduced in the Talmud to thirty-nine. Now, there is no ingenuous exegete on earth who would make us believe that if one says forty, he means thirty-nine. We have here, therefore again a case of modified legislation, though under the guise of a peculiar exegesis. The reason for the modification is obvious. As the law (ib.) expressly prohibits any excession in the number of stripes "less thy brother seem vile unto thee," the limit was shifted so as

in order not to intrude upon the dominion of the earth" This explanation was made so as to pacify the minds of the masses, whose faith might suffer, were the mentioned contradiction of R. Jose allowed to stand unexplained.

positively not to exceed the established limits by any mistake.

When the command to remove the leaven from the house on the first day of Passover (Ex. xii, 15) is so explained as to refer to the eve of Passover, we have again before us an example of genuine exegesis, but really of abrogation of a Biblical law; for when the Bible says, "Seven days shalt ye eat Matzoth" and distinctly says, "but on the first day ye shalt remove the leaven from the house," it cannot mean on the day before.

The famous R. Johannan, the supposed author of the Palestinian Talmud, a scholar who upheld the principle that one should endeavor by all means to trace every Halakha to Mosaic times (Pal. Tal. Sabbath ch. i), to whom we owe a number of Halakhoth supposed to have been communicated by God to Moses, of which no one else knew (Hehaluz vol. III), and who maintained that an halakhic statement may be based on an unrectitude of scriptural passage (Pal. Tal. Berakhoth ch. ii), was not scrupulous about making a statement which positively contradicts the Bible. According to him, the deluge, which, as we are told, in Genesis vii, 21-24, extended over the entire earth and destroyed every being on earth beneath the skies, did not extend over Palestine (Sebhochim 113).

From such and many more examples of Biblical laws modified in the Talmud and often reduced to such a state as not to be recognized in their original form, we

may safely learn that the Talmud is not a commentary upon the Bible.

If the Talmud is not a commentary, let us see if it is a legal code. We cannot say it is, for the Talmud itself is explicit in stating that one must not derive a law for practical application from any halakhic statement, nor even from a precedent, unless in either case it be expressly said that the law or statement is intended as a practical rule (Baba Bathra 130 b). Further: R. Issi asked of R. Johannan, "What shall we do if you pronounce a law to be a Halakha?" to which R. Johannan replied: "Do not act in accordance with it until you have heard from me that it is an Halakha of practice." How should we practice all these Halakhas which are not intended for practical application? We should then be doing the very thing we ought not to do and thus wilfully pervert the intention of the rabbis of the Talmud.

It is prohibited to apply statements in the Mishnah to practical cases. Such as do it are called "destroyers of the earth" (Sotah 22a).

Only a few, if any, Halakhas are found in the Talmud which are accompanied by the remark which stamps them as rules for practical life. Many customs are recorded in the Talmud which contradict explicit halakhic statements. Thus R. Hayya is said to have sewed his phylacteries with thread, while an Halakha, which is supposed to be Mosaic, says that veins of animals should be used for that purpose (Makkoth xi).

Halakhoth, which was said by R. Johanna to be Mo-
saic, were disregarded by his successors (Megilla 19).

"We do not heed the voice of Heaven in halakhic matters," a very peculiar statement indeed from the mouth of R. Joshua, a celebrated authority of pre-Mishnic times, who would rather excommunicate the dissenting R. Eliezer, because he would not submit to the verdict of the majority, than pay attention to a voice supposed to have been heard in favor of the recalcitrant scholar. The prophet Elijah himself, who, when he comes to this earth again, is supposed to solve many questions not answered and clarify doubts and riddles, is deprived of his authority in legal disputes. The custom is that sandals and not shoes are used in the act described in Deut. xxv, 7-10, even though Elijah may come and maintain the contrary (Yebamoth 102). If the Talmud is neither a commentary nor a code, what then is it?

In my subsequent chapters I shall endeavor to prove that the Talmud is an independent critic, adapting itself to the spirit of the times and accomplishing for its followers, the Jews, the alteration and abrogation of Biblical laws and prescriptions. This was also the aim of the Christian abrogation of the Bible, but how differently they accomplished their purpose! Whereas Christianity was compelled to bring Divinity down upon this earth in human form and place it on a level with man, giving it life and letting it die for the sins of mankind, Judaism, on the contrary, elevated the human spirit by

the power of God to Divinity itself, without carrying the spirit within the regions of heaven. This latter statement is carried out by the Talmud in Rosch Hashono 25a, as follows: Speaking about the verse in the Bible (Leviticus xxiii, 4), "These are the festivals of the Lord, called holy, that ye shalt celebrate them in their time." The Talmud says: "Thou shalt not read **אֲנֵיהֶם** to mean "them" (the Festivals) but **אַתָּה** to mean "ye," so that whenever you celebrate the Festivals, they shall be holy, whether in time or not." Thereto is added the legend: "When the angels asked God when the festivals take place, He answered them: We shall all go below and ask the court of the sages, as they determine the time of the festivals.

Another instance bearing upon the subject can be found in Moed Katan 16a: God says: I govern the world, but who governs me? The righteous; for when I ordain anything, the righteous can thwart it (by prayer).

These two citations, one being an halakhic and the other hagaddic, are but part of many which I bring in support of my above statement.

The subsequent chapters also prove that the spirit of the Talmud is unfortunately lost to us, by reason of the Schulchan Aruch (Jewish legal code) having been given us in dead letters, which we must not change, without providing us with a body, to whom we can refer all questions and disputes arising from the citations of said code for decision. Catholicism has its Pope, Protestantism its Synods, Mohammedanism its

Sheikh al Islam, who are all empowered to change and determine the laws according to the spirit of their religions, as time and place may require, but the Jews have nobody to whom they can refer their disputes for final decision.

NOTE TO PAGE 26, LINE 13.

Rabbi David ben Zakkai in his decision known as: "*Shaloth-Uth'shuboth 'Rodbaz,'*" states in his 442nd decision, that according to conclusions drawn from the Talmud, "the Jews have never seen the tables and their miraculous scripture" In the time of the king Josiah, when the art of writing found more propagation, and some people were anxious to examine the scripture of the tables, the ark of covenant disappeared (*Hamaor*). In Shekolim (chap vi, Mishnah i) the following is stated: "There was a tradition among the Jews where the ark is hidden. Once a priest noticed during his service one pave-stone of the temple different from the others, and he came to tell this to his comrades, but before he finished the tale of his discovery, he died, and they knew that there was the hiding place of the ark."

There we see that for the sake of secrecy, which was considered a necessity, even human life was not spared.

This undoubtedly, our sages have learned from our law-giver Moses, who ordered to keep his grave secret, to prevent his earthly remains from serving as an object of worship to the idolatrously inclined people.

A critical eye will detect here something to the credit of the Mosaic religion in preference to some others.



The author begs leave to announce to his friends and his readers, that the second edition of his work "History of Amulets, Charms and Talismans," will soon appear, revised and amended with additional new matter on subjects of interest, and will contain about 200 pages of like size with this pamphlet.



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